DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 146 138 SP 011 787

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TITLE Student Teacher Placements Based on Educational Beliefs.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Conflict; *Cooperating Teachers; *Educational Attitudes; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Personality Problems; Placement; Preservice Education; *Student Teachers; Student Teaching

ABSTRACT

This study was an initial step to determine the feasibility of matching student teachers (ST's) with cooperating teachers (CT's) on the basis of similar educational beliefs. This project grew out of the concern of Oklahoma State University student teaching supervisors that the mismatching of ST's with CT's on the basis of dissimilar perceptions regarding educational beliefs and practices often leads to a nonproductive relationship between the ST and CT. During 1976 fall semester, all OSU ST's enrolled for elementary student teaching and their CT's (N=132) were asked to participate. Prior to the commencement of student teaching, 31 CT's and 50 ST's completed and returned inventories assessing educational beliefs. Inventories were: The Study of Beliefs Inventory (PBI and TPI), Beliefs about Teaching and Learning Inventory (BTLI), and the Behavioral Problems Inventory (BPI). At the termination of the student teaching semester, eight university supervisors of the ST's assessed the quantity, severity, and nature of conflicts perceived to have occurred during the ST-CT relationship. It was predicted that ST-CT pairs who experienced conflict, as perceived by the university supervisor, would significantly differ on responses to the measures of educational beliefs. Analysis of comparisons between ST's and CT's in the ten conflict pairs indicated no significant differences on responses to the inventories. Results indicate that the inventories do not discriminate between ST's and CT's in terms of educational beliefs, and the CT's and ST's may be more alike than different in their beliefs about education. Interpretation of the conflict data indicated that personality may play a greater role in producing severe conflict than differences related to educational beliefs. It may be that differences related to educational beliefs are more easily resolved by ST's and CT's while personality conflicts are more difficult to resolve and often require outside intervention. (Authors)

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STUDENT TEACHER PLACEMENTS BASED ON EDUCATIONAL BELIEFS

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During the 1976 Fall semester, all student teachers enrolled in the Oklahoma State University elementary education program and their prospective cooperating teachers located in communities within a 75-mile radius of Oklahoma State University were asked to participate in the present study. It is an initial attempt by university supervisors to determine the feasibility of the use of various attitudinal inventories to predict the probability of a positive and productive relationship between a cooperating teacher and a student teacher.

This study grew out of the concern of supervisors at Oklahoma State University that the mismatching of cooperating teachers and student teachers on the basis of their preceptions regarding educational beliefs and practices often leads to a non-productive relationship between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher. Since the primary objective of the student teaching program is to provide an atmosphere in which the student teacher with his/her own value and belief system will experience positive professional growth, it is important that the student teacher be placed in an environment where the beliefs regarding the purpose of the school are consistent with those of co-workers during the student teaching experience.

It has been observed by university supervisors that conflict is sometimes experienced in the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship. While the nature and severity of conflict vary, the effects are usually nonproductive. In most relationships, the student teacher and cooperating teacher are able to work together to overcome any problems. In cases where severe conflict occurs, the university supervisor is often called upon to intervene and act as mediator. But occasionally more drastic steps must be taken including relocating the student teacher with a different cooperating teacher.

Many of the conflicts which occur in the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship are due to differences in educational beliefs and practices. Brown (1968) observed that conflicts over teaching practices are extensions of arguments about beliefs which for most people are accepted as unexamined premises or self-evident "truths." Burton maintains, "People disagree about relative merits of various teaching practices because they hold conflicting beliefs about what is "'right,' 'good,' or 'true,'" (Brown, 1968, p. 4). While these beliefs are often unexamined, they do become manifest in the teacher's classroom practices.

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The student teaching experience is by nature one in which a beginning teacher is given the opportunity of applying educational skills and beliefs in an actual classroom setting under the supervision of a master teacher.

The student teacher who holds conflicting educational beliefs from those of the cooperating teacher with whom he/she has been placed is indeed in a difficult situation. That student teacher may for the time being conform to the educational practices of the cooperating teacher in order to survive the experience, or risk the cooperating teacher's disapproval and possible negative evaluation by engaging in educational practices which run counter to those ideas held by the cooperating teacher.

One possible solution to this dilemma is to match up or place student teachers with those cooperating teachers who hold similar educational beliefs. In this way, student teachers could more freely practice what they have learned without fear of disapproval from the cooperating teacher. The cooperating teacher would in turn reinforce the student teacher's beliefs in a situation where conflicts would be minimal. Another advantage which occurs would be fewer severe conflicts resulting in fewer student teachers having to be relocated in new placement situations. But probably the greatest advantage would be the resulting positive atmosphere conducive to professional growth for both student teacher and cooperating teacher.

The present study was an initial step to ultimately determine the effects of matching student teachers with cooperating teachers on the basis of similar educational beliefs. It was designed to determine the feasibility of the use of various measures of educational beliefs and practices to predict the probability of a positive and productive relationship between a cooperating teacher and a student teacher.

The assumptions underlying this investigation include:

1. Effective teachers are those who have a high degree of congruency between educational beliefs and practices.

2. The modeling role of the cooperating teacher has a great impact on the student teacher's subsequent classroom behavior and professional commitment.

3. Conflicts arise when student teachers and cooperating teachers who hold conflicting educational beliefs are placed together in the classroom.

It was predicted that:

1. Student teacher/cooperating teacher pairs who experience conflict, as perceived by the university supervisor, in the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship will significantly differ on responses to the measures of educational beliefs and practices.

2. Student teacher/cooperating teacher pairs who experience no conflict, as perceived by the university supervisor, will not differ significantly on responses to the measures of educational beliefs and practices.

Methods

Subjects. Sixty-six student teachers (STs) and sixty-six cooperating teachers (CTs) (N = 132) participating in the Oklahoma State University elementary student teaching program during the 1976 Fall semester were sent a letter explaining the project and four attitudinal inventories to be completed and returned before the actual commencement of the student teaching experience. The sample consisted of all elementary student teachers enrolled for 1976 Fall semester plus their cooperating teachers located in various towns and cities within a 75-mile radius of the University. Participation was voluntary.

Thirty-one cooperating teachers and 50 student teachers completed and returned the inventories (see Table 1). Twelve cooperating teachers actively refused to participate either verbally or through written communication. Reasons given for refusing to participate included the following:

1. Inventories were too lengthy.
2. Study wasn't relevant to education.
3. Inventory questions were too personal and involved references to a supernatural being.
4. Cooperating teachers are overworked and don't have time to fill out forms.
5. It's probably beneficial for student teachers and cooperating teachers to be mismatched.

Twenty-three cooperating teachers and sixteen student teachers did not return the inventories and did not voice their refusal to participate.

Eight University supervisors responsible for teaching methods courses and supervising the elementary teachers completed, at the termination of the student teaching experience, a questionnaire assessing the quantity, severity, and nature of conflicts perceived to have occurred during the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship.

Inventories. The following inventories measuring personal and educational beliefs and practices, were to be completed and returned by student teachers and cooperating teachers prior to the commencement of the student teaching experience.

I. The Study of Beliefs Inventory (5th revision). This inventory consisted of two parts: the PBI and the TPI. Brown (1968) designed the inventory to determine the extent of one's agreement with Dewey's philosophy of experimentalism. It has been administered to groups of undergraduate and graduate students in education, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, and

administrators in education. The reliability coefficients for the instrument are considered quite satisfactory and compare favorably with coefficients reported for other respected measures in this area such as the Allport-Vernon Study of Values (.39-.84) and the Dogmatism Scale (.68-.93) (Brown, 1968).

Given responses range from "I agree very much" to "I disagree very much." The higher the score, the higher the agreement with Dewey's philosophy of experimentalism.

A. Personal Belief Inventory (PBI). The PBI measures the extent to which one's own personal belief system is congruent with Dewey's philosophy of experimentalism. The nature of the questions includes continuity of mind and body, permanence and change, science and morals, emotions and intellect, freedom and authority, and knowing and doing. A typical statement is: Man doesn't have a spirit which is separable from his body and the material world. There are 40 items on the PBI and scores range from 0 to 200. Reliabilities (split-half, test-retest, and comparable forms) range from .55 to .78.

B. Teacher Practice Inventory (TPI). The TPI measures the extent to which the teaching practices perceived by the respondent as being "correct" are congruent with those teacher practices associated with Dewey's philsophy of experimentalism. The nature of the questions includes situations of experience, evaluation and judgment of results, neglect of direct experiences, reliance upon extrinsic motivation, and the imposition of a general method on all alike. Responses range from "I agree very much" to "I disagree very much." A typical statement is: Good teaching usually has all students working on the same page of the same book at the same time. There are 40 items on the TPI and scores range from 0 to 200. Reliabilities (split-half, test-retest, and comparable forms) range from .56 to .94.

II. Beliefs About Teaching and Learning Inventory (BTLI). The BTLI is a modified version of Barth's (1970) "Assumptions about Learning and Knowledge" inventory. The BTLI measures the extent to which the respondent's educational beliefs are consistent with the assumptions underlying an open approach to education. Such assumptions and items include: 1. Children have both the competence and the right to make significant decisions concerning their own learning. 2. Confidence in self is highly related to capacity for learning and for making important choices affecting one's learning.

Given responses range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." There are 36 items on the BTLI and scores range from 0 to 144.

III. The Behavioral Problems Inventory (BPI). The BPI designed by Dobson, Hawkins, and Bowman (1971) is based upon studies reported by Wickman (1928) and others who compiled and validated lists of children's acts perceived by teachers as misbehavior. The BPI measures the degree of severity (high, medium, or low) of children's behavior problems as perceived by the respondent. The

respondent is given a list of behaviors such as running in the hall and failure to pay attention and is asked to check each behavior as being of high, medium, or low seriousness.

There are 38 items on the BPI and scores range from 0 to 114. The split-half reliability was .70.

IV. The Supervisor Questionnaire. Oklahoma State University supervisors of elementary student teachers, in a position of close contact with the student teacher/cooperating teacher pair, completed this questionnaire at the termination of the student teaching experience. It was assumed that supervisors are in a more objective position to judge possible conflict than the student teacher or cooperating teacher. Judgments of conflicts as indicated by student teachers and cooperating teachers themselves were found by the researchers to be an unsatisfactory index in the preliminary pilot study conducted during the previous student teaching semester. Student teachers and cooperating teachers in this pilot study who were asked to make judgments concerning perceived conflicts often did not respond or indicated a "no conflict" situation contrary to the supervisor's perceptions. It is felt that student teachers and cooperating teachers often fail to report problems because they wish the situation to be viewed as positive by others such as school administrators and university student teacher placement personnel. Therefore, the present study utilized the judgments of the university supervisors.

Each supervisor was asked to indicate whether conflict occurred in any of the student teacher/cooperating teacher pairs assigned to the supervisor. Conflict was defined broadly as any disagreement between student teacher and cooperating teacher as perceived by the supervisor through observation or conversations with the student teacher or cooperating teacher.

Each supervisor was asked to describe the nature of the conflict (personality conflict, difference in educational beliefs or practices, etc.); severity of the conflict (from minor differences to irreconcilable situation); and source of disclosure (observation, conversation, etc.)

Table 1

	Group	
	CT	ST
No. of Inventories returned	43	50
No. of Completions	31	50
No. of Refusals	12	0
Total No. of Inventories	66	66

Analysis of Data

The results of the comparisons made between CTs and STs on each of the inventories is given in Table 2.

Table 2

	PBI		TPI		BTLI		BPI	
	CT	ST	CT	ST	CT	ST	CT	ST
N	29	50	30	50	31	50	31	50
$\bar{X}$	103.66	98.78	132.90	138.90	88.65	93.40	70.90	73.50
S	15.19	12.57	17.59	16.65	7.35	10.03	13.29	10.17
F	1.46		1.12		1.86*		1.71*	
t	1.30		-1.53		2.02**		- .93	

*Significant at the .10 level

**Significant at the .05 level

Homogeneity of variance was rejected for the BTLI and BPI inventories. Only on the BTLI was there a significant difference between the means of CTs and STs. There was no evidence to support differences between the means of the groups on the PBI, TPI or BPI.

The supervisors identified 20 CT/ST pairs where conflict was perceived. Analysis of the inventories of 10 of these conflict pairs was possible. Of the remaining 10 conflict pairs, 5 lacked return from only the CT and 5 lacked return from both the CT and ST.

Analysis of the inventories of CT/ST conflict pairs given in Table 3 reveals that there was no significant relationship between them on any of the inventories.

Table 3

	PBI		TPI		BTLI		BPI	
	Con CT	Con ST	Con CT	Con ST	Con CT	Con ST	Con CT	Con ST
N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
$\bar{X}$	104.00	96.30	131.40	142.90	90.00	94.10	69.90	71.20
S	13.20	17.59	17.87	12.86	5.79	5.93	12.76	9.51
r	-.08		.35		.13		-.15	

Analysis of the inventories of CTs perceived to be in a conflict situation was made with those perceived not to be in a conflict situation on each of the inventories. The results of this analysis given in Table 4 indicate that performance on any of the inventories and whether or not the CT was perceived to have a conflict are independent as reflected in the tests of the appropriate point-biserial coefficients.

Table 4

	PBI		TPI		BTLI		BPI	
	Con CT	Noncon CT	Con CT	Noncon CT	Con CT	Noncon CT	Con CT	Noncon CT
N	10	19	10	20	10	21	10	21
$\bar{X}$	104.00	103.47	131.40	133.65	90.00	88.00	69.90	71.38
S	13.20	16.48	17.87	17.86	5.79	8.04	12.76	13.82
rpb	.02		-.06		.13		-.05	

Analysis of the inventories of the STs perceived to be in a conflict situation was made with those STs perceived not to be in a conflict situation on each of the inventories. The results of this analysis given in Table 5 indicate that performance on any of the inventories and whether or not the ST was perceived to have a conflict are independent as reflected in the tests of the appropriate point-biserial coefficients.

Table 5

	PBI		TPI		BTLI		BPI	
	Con ST	Noncon ST	Con ST	Noncon ST	Con ST	Noncon ST	Con ST	Noncon ST
N	15	35	15	35	15	35	15	35
$\bar{X}$	96.27	99.86	142.07	137.54	94.53	92.91	72.87	73.77
S	15.51	11.17	16.43	16.80	10.41	9.97	10.43	10.20
rpb	-.13		.12		.07		-.04	

Analysis of the invetories of those CTs not perceived to be in a conflict situation was made with those STs not perceived to be in a conflict situation on each of the invetories. Table 6 indicates that homogeneity of variance was rejected only for the PBI inventory. There was no evidence to support differences between the means of the groups on any of the inventories.

Table 6

	PBI		TPI		BTLI		BPI	
	Noncon CT	Noncon ST	Noncon CT	Noncon ST	Noncon CT	Noncon ST	Noncon CT	Noncon ST
N	19	35	20	35	21	35	21	35
$\bar{X}$	103.47	99.86	133.65	137.54	88.00	92.91	71.38	73.77
S	16.48	11.17	17.86	16.80	8.04	9.97	13.82	10.20
F	2.17*		1.13		1.54		1.84	
t	.85		- .81		-1.91		- .74	

*Significant at the .10 level

Table 7 categorizes the reported conflicts according to type and severity.

Table 7

		Level of Conflict Severity			
		Severe	Medium	Minor	Total
Type	Personality	2	1	1	4
	Beliefs/Practices	2	2	5	9
	Combination	2	3	2	7
	Total	6	6	8	20

Results and Discussion

Prediction Results. The prediction that student teacher/cooperating teacher pairs who experienced conflict, as perceived by the University supervisor, in the student teacher/cooperating teacher relationship would significantly differ on responses to the measures of educational beliefs and practices did not hold. In fact, there were no significant differences between student teachers and cooperating teachers in the conflict pairs on any of the four measures of educational beliefs and practices. It appears that the inventories did not discriminate conflict pairs and probably would not be good predictors for matching student teachers with cooperating teachers on the basis of educational beliefs and practices for the prevention of possible conflict.

Comparisons of STs and CTs on Inventory Responses. Results in Table 2 indicate no significant differences between the groups of STs and CTs on any of the four inventories except in the case of the BTLI. It appears that the BTLI was the only inventory which discriminated between groups of STs and CTs. One explanation for this difference is that the BTLI measures the extent to which the respondent agrees with the assumptions underlying an open approach to education. Furthermore, it may be that groups of STs and CTs have become polarized concerning the issues of open education possibly due to some sort of generation gap or more exposure of STs to the theoretical basis for an open approach to education in their university methods courses.

It appears that STs and CTs, at least in this sample, are more alike than different in relation to responses concerning personal beliefs, beliefs about teacher practices, and attitudes toward severity of behavior problems.

However, the fact does remain that conflicts often occur which lead to a non-productive relationship between ST and CT during the ST-CT experience. Indeed, such conflicts, as judged by the University supervisors, did occur in the present study. Perhaps the nature and severity of such conflicts should be investigated in order to determine means for their prevention.

Nature of Conflict. University supervisors indicated that of the 20 ST-CT conflict pairs, 4 were primarily personality conflicts, 9 were conflicts related to educational beliefs and practices, and 7 were a combination of the two (see Table 7).

Of the 10 ST-CT conflict pairs which were open to analysis, 2 were personality conflicts, 5 were conflicts related to educational beliefs and practices, and 3 were a combination of the two.

Severity of Conflict. University supervisors indicated that of the 20 ST CT conflict pairs, 6 were of a severe nature (see Table 7). Of the 6 severe conflict pairs, 2 were personality conflicts, 2 were related to educational beliefs and practices, and 2 were combinations of the two. Half of the severe conflict pairs involved personality conflicts. Whereas, of the 8 ST-CT pairs with minor conflict, the majority of the pairs (7 pairs) involved conflicts of educational beliefs and practices. It may well be that personality may play a greater role in producing severe conflict than differences related to educational beliefs and practices. Further investigation is called for to determine the relationship of personality differences to degree of conflict in the ST-CT relationship. Perhaps differences related to educational beliefs and practices are more easily dealt with by STs and CTs, and therefore, do not develop into severe conflicts. Whereas, personality conflicts are much more difficult to resolve. Perhaps the emphasis should be on placing STs with CTs of compatible personalities rather than on the basis of similar educational beliefs and practices. This would be an area of input for the university supervisor who is often well acquainted with STs and CTs, and could help in the placement of STs to prevent possible personality conflicts.

The investigators, after being involved in the initial study, have been reinforced in their view of the importance of a positive experience during student teaching to enhance the professional growth of the student teacher. We firmly believe that teachers ought to be more different than alike. However, this belief does not preclude the fact that STs need a positive growth experience during their student teaching. This positive growth experience can only come about when the student teacher's beliefs and perceptions are confirmed in a great measure by those of the cooperating teacher.

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